

**BAINBRIDGE ISLAND METROPOLITAN PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING FEBRUARY 18, 2010
STRAWBERRY HILL CENTER**

CALL TO ORDER A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chair Cross.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Bang-Knudsen, Lee Cross, Ken DeWitt, Kirk Robinson, and Tom Swolgaard.

Absent: Executive Director Terry Lande (Perry Barrett attended in his place)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

STATE PARKS LETTER: Chair Cross introduced this evening's special board meeting saying that because of the short notice, the meeting was publicized only on the home page of the District's website. (*The special board meeting was scheduled by the Commissioners at the 2/11/10 regular board meeting*). She said the only item on the agenda is the letter to the WA State Parks and Recreation Commission. Prior to tonight's meeting, she had circulated copies of a draft letter to Board Members and asked for comments. The draft letter was written by Chair Cross and Commissioner DeWitt. The goal tonight is to have a letter ready to send by the end of the meeting. The reason immediate action is needed is because the State legislators have asked if the Board wants them to take any action regarding the potential transfer of Fort Ward State Park. The State legislature is meeting right now and is scheduled to adjourn March 11. Any input from the board is needed now.

Commissioner Bang-Knudsen said he had new information to present, saying he just became aware of a 1/22/10 draft letter prepared by Don Hoch (WA State Parks Regional Director). Commissioner Bang-Knudsen expressed concern that it was not presented to the Board, since the draft had to do with park transfer negotiations. He contacted Don Hoch that morning, introduced himself as a new Commissioner, and asked to be updated on the state park issue. Commissioner Bang-Knudsen said Don Hoch told him the following: the island's State Parks are ok now and are not closing; State Parks sees this as an opportunity for a local jurisdiction and do not want to push the parks on anyone; State Parks understands the Bainbridge community would like to see Fay Bainbridge and Fort Ward remain state parks; State Parks would like a letter from the Park Board stating its position; interest in a cooperative approach between the two agencies was expressed as an option. Commissioner Bang-Knudsen also contacted State Representative Christine Rolfes about the issue. She emailed her response which indicated the following: Fort Ward did not receive funding in the Governor's December budget and is listed as a transfer to the Park District; State Parks had listed Fort Ward as a transfer since they were under the impression the Park District wanted it and it would save them money; as of today there is enough funding to keep the park open; if the Park District does not want it, they need to know. He replied by email asking her opinion on the subject. She responded saying "I think that you should keep it as a state park until the Park District is completely capable and interested in taking it over. The State will always be willing to give it to us."

Commissioner Swolgaard responded to Commissioner Bang-Knudsen's concern about not being presented the draft letter from Don Hoch. He said Don Hoch had sent the draft to Executive Director Terry Lande for the purpose of working out the language, when the letter was withdrawn by State Parks Agency Director Rex Derr. Terry Lande was asked not to show the draft to the Board since it was withdrawn, but he did bring it to the attention of several board members. Commissioner Swolgaard said Terry Lande has also been told by the Board not to get involved in the state park issue any more, and that this is one reason (in addition to a scheduling conflict) why he is not here this evening. Commissioner Cross indicated that the draft letter was a work in progress between Don Hoch and Terry Lande, because the Board had asked Terry Lande after the Governor's Report came out to get something in writing from the State since the Board never received a response to their 9/28/09 letter to the State Parks Commission deferring action until after the Governor's Report was issued.

Discussion followed during which several Board Members expressed a desire for more communication between the Park Board and the State Parks Commission directly, and less information filtered through the staff of both agencies. It was noted there is a level of confusion at the State with budget cuts being made and a bill under consideration that if passed would merge the State Parks Department into the Department of Natural Resources.

Commissioner Bang Knudsen said the State is looking for guidance from this Board. He asked what the Board's plan is. He'd like staff to prove what a great opportunity this is. If the Park District took on Fort Ward, what would the District do with it? Commissioner DeWitt brought up a number of possibilities discussed this past year including: maintaining its current use for walking and hiking; providing park programming; restoring the tennis courts; installation of play equipment. It was noted that Park District standards for maintenance are higher than the current standards for the park. Also discussed was how realistic it is to think the State might have time to work with the District to develop coordinated efforts in the park. While staff has been directed to work towards this end, it was noted the State has larger issues to address at this time. It was also noted that coordinated efforts with other agencies have often not worked well, with the Park District frequently assuming most of the work and headaches.

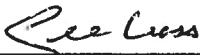
Discussion followed concerning the draft letter and whether it represented the Board's position in stating that the Board is interested in discussing the transfer if the State decides it must close Fort Ward State Park. Commissioner Swolgaard asked the Commissioners why they are reluctant to accept Fort Ward State Park. Several Board Members expressed personal frustration with the State's process and manner of communication. Commissioner Cross mentioned that the Board must consider what is best for the public and how the best deal can be negotiated. Commissioner Swolgaard said the District is in the best position right now to negotiate. Commissioner Robinson said the goal is to keep the park open whether it is a State or District park. Commissioner Bang-Knudsen asked about the risk of another agency expressing interest and mentioned the possibility of a bidding war. Commissioner Swolgaard said he heard the Suquamish Tribe may have contacted State Parks. Commissioner Robinson said he is willing to take the park if necessary, but is concerned about how much the District would be taking on. He said that while the condition of the District's parks has improved greatly in the past six years, the master planning of parks is just now beginning. He does not want to see this effort diverted from other District parks. Commissioner DeWitt expressed concern with the cost of deferred maintenance at Fort Ward. Commissioner Swolgaard mentioned \$100,000.00 is slated to come with the park and will address these costs. Commissioner DeWitt said the State has wanted to get rid of Fort Ward State for years and has deliberately stopped putting money into it. Commissioner Swolgaard asked then why the Board does not accept the park. Commissioner Bang-Knudsen suggested justifying the immediacy of taking the park to the community by using some of the same reasons used to pass the levy lid lift, such as preservation of greenways and trail connections. He suggested Fort Ward as a destination spot on the south end of the island that trails can link to.


Commissioner Cross turned the discussion back to the letter. Commissioner Bang-Knudsen expressed dissatisfaction with it saying it needs to be more clear. The Board began reviewing the letter paragraph by paragraph discussing edits. **MSC: Bang-Knudsen/DeWitt: That the letter be completed tonight. (Nay – Swolgaard)** Discussion continued on how to edit the letter, until a final more condensed version was agreed upon which states the following Board position: "If...the State Parks Commission is unable to keep its commitment to keep all State Parks open and decides it must close Fort Ward State Park, BIMPRD's Board of Commissioners would like to be considered as the jurisdiction first in line to accept a possible transfer of the park." **MSC: DeWitt/Robinson: That the letter be accepted with the edits made. (Nay – Swolgaard)** Commissioner Swolgaard advocated for the acceptance of Fort Ward State Park and expressed disappointment with the Board saying it needs to take a stance one way or another. It was noted that the chair will sign the letter.

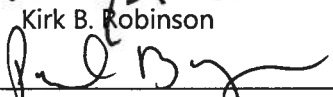
It was also noted briefly by the Chair that the 2/20/10 Board Retreat has been cancelled.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:09 pm.

Elizabeth R. Shepherd
BAINBRIDGE ISLAND METROPOLITAN
PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT

BY: 

BY: 
Lee Cross
Kirk B. Robinson

BY: 
Paul Bang-Knudsen

BY: _____
John Thomas Swolgaard

ATTEST: 
Kenneth R. DeWitt - Secretary